

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 6445

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PBOR,AR,CI
SUBJ: TODMAN VISIT: BEAGLE CHANNEL

REF: A) SANTIAGO 6367 B) BUENOS AIRES 5551

1. THE CHILEANS HAVE TOLD US THEY WILL DISCUSS THE BEAGLE CHANNEL SITUATION WITH ASSISTANT TODMAN (REF A).

2. ON THE EVE OF THE FIRST ROUND OF TALKS BETWEEN CHILE AND ARGENTINA IN BUENOS AIRES IN LATE JULY, THE GOC ISSUED A SUPREME DECREE DEFINING POINT-TO-POINT BASE LINES DOWN CHILE'S ARCHIPELAGO FROM PUERTO MONTT TO THE EASTERLY MID-POINT OF THE BEAGLE CHANNEL AS SET BY THE ARBITRATION AWARD IN MAY (SANTIAGO 5879). IN SPITE OF GOC PROTESTATIONS TO US THAT IT WAS NOT RUBBING SALT IN THE WOUND THIS ACTION COME AS A SURPRISE TO THE GOA, ACCORDING TO AN ARGENTINE DIPLOMAT WHO SPENT HIS WEEKEND REPORTING THE EVENT. ALMOST SIMULTANEOUSLY THE GOC PUT OUT A NEW CHILEAN MAP SHOWING THE BEAGLE CHANNEL AWARD.

3. AS REPORTED IN REF B, THE ENSUING TALKS PRESUMABLY ACCOMPLISHED LITTLE AND WE GATHER THE ATMOSPHERE WAS TESTY. SUBSEQUENTLY, THE CHILEAN PRESS REPORTED VERY TOUGH STATEMENTS FROM SIGNIFICANT ARGENTINES, INCLUDING

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ADMIRAL MASSERA'S ALLEGED AFFIRMATION THAT THE "ARMED FORCES ARE PREPARED TO AVOID ANY GEOGRAPHIC MUTILATION OF THE COUNTRY."

4. WE HAVE JUST ACQUIRED A COPY OF THE MAP FROM GOC DEPICTING THE POINT-TO-POINT BASELINES AS DESCRIBED IN THE DECREE. ACCORDING TO A RANKING GOC CARTOGRAPHER,

THE CHILEANS TOLD THE ARGENTINES THAT THE GOC PROPOSES TO RUN ITS 200 MILE MARITIME JURISDICTION DUE EAST FROM THE END OF THE CHANNEL RATHER THAN TO BISSECT THE ANGLE AT THE INTERSECTION OF THE TWO TERRITORIAL JURISDICTIONS. EITHER WAY, OF COURSE, THE GOC WOULD GAIN A TOEHOLD INTO THE SOUTH ATLANTIC.

5. NEITHER SIDE SEEMS EAGER TO PUSH THE MATTER TOO FAR. FOREIGN MINISTER CARVAJAL HAD NICE WORDS FOR ARGENTINA IN HIS JULY 29 TOUR D'HORIZON (SANTIAGO 6342) AND ARGENTINE FOREIGN MINISTER MONTES WAS SAID BY AFP AUGUST 5 TO HAVE FOUND CHILE/ARGENTINE RELATIONS "VERY GOOD".

6. COMMENT: SUCH ARE THE COMPLEXITIES OF SOUTHERN CONE RELATIONS. TRADITIONAL COMPETITION REMAINS A SERIOUS BARRIER TO THE FORMATION OF AN EFFECTIVE BLOC. WE DO NOT SEE HOW THE FOREIGN OFFICE DISCUSSION OF THIS TOPIC CAN EXTEND BEYOND A BRIEF STATEMENT OF CHILE'S POSITION. THE USG HAS NOT EXPRESSED ITSELF ON THE ARBITRATION RESULT, NOR IS THERE ANY NEED TO DURING THE TODMAN VISIT.

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Message Attributes

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